

Policy Name:	GOOD RELATIONS POLICY
Date Created:	Nov 2014
Last Reviewed:	Nov 2016
Next Review Date:	Nov 2018

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Ulster University Students' Union is a place for learning and engagement, where people from all backgrounds are encouraged to participate in University life. In line with the Students' Union's Constitution this policy aims to ensure that preference shall not be given to, or advantage withheld, from any member on grounds of religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status, gender, disability, sexual orientation or those responsible for dependents.

The Students' Union is a charitable body, set up to provide advice and guidance on welfare and academic issues to students and provide representation at the highest level at the University and within Northern Ireland. Through this policy the Students' Union voluntarily and willingly aligns itself with the employment legislation and policies relating to the University on good relations. Prior to the introduction of this policy, the Students' Union has always tried to take a number of significant steps to ensure issues relating to good relations across all Ulster university campuses are kept to a high standard.

This Good Relations Policy outlines the Students' Union's commitment to be an example of good practice in this area. It aligns with the University's Equality Scheme:

[www.ulster.ac.uk/aboutus/governance/equality-diversity/equality-scheme](http://www.ulster.ac.uk/aboutus/governance/equality-diversity/equality-scheme)

This includes a high level action plan which maps out how the Students' Union will fulfill this policy commitment within the context of Northern Ireland.

## DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this policy:

**The Good Relations Duty - Section 75 (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998** refers to any public authority which, when carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland, must have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

'Section 75 (2) (the Good Relations Duty) formalizes the shift from **managing** diversity and difference to promoting diversity and integration. It requires public authorities to take a **pro-active** initiating approach to contributing to a shared society, rather than responding to the effects of a divided one'.  
Equality commission Northern Ireland By good relations we mean "the growth of relationships and structures for Northern Ireland that acknowledge the religious, political and racial context of this society, and that seek to promote respect, equity and trust, and embrace diversity in all its forms.- Equality commission Northern Ireland.

**An effective Good Relations policy** is one whereby every person knows, accepts and embodies good relations as a core value in all of their interactions at the University. It aims to maximize the potential of students and encourages them to function in a comfortable environment. Good Relations policies are designed to foster and encourage healthy debate and exchange while excluding violence or threat of any kind. The aim of our policy is to ensure that student culture in Ulster University is vibrant, open and tolerant based on our principles of acknowledging and welcoming diversity, promoting equality of opportunity and access and ensuring that students of all backgrounds are welcome and free from intimidation or threat. The policy will normally be self-regulating every e.g The student union officers will evaluate the policy and make amendments or updates which they deem fit for the policy, these amendments and updates will then be passed by council.

**The Equality Duty - Section 75 (1) requires the University**, in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:

- persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- men and women generally;
- persons with a disability and persons without; and
- persons with dependents and persons without.

Diversity describes the range of visible and non-visible differences that exist between people. Managing diversity harnesses these differences to create a productive environment in which everybody feels valued, where talents are fully utilised and in which organisational goals are met (Kandola and Fullerton 1998).

Inclusion in equal opportunities terms is about making every member of a community feel that they are not prevented from taking part in any activity, applying for any job, applying to become a student in any Higher Education Institution, because of any personal characteristic relating to their race or ethnicity, gender, disability status, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age or socio-economic group. Policies and practices that are open, fair, transparent and equitable encourage inclusion.

## **RELEVANT LEGISLATION & POLICIES**

The policy seeks compliance with the following legislation and policies:

- Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998);
- The Race Relations (NI) Order (1997);
- Sex Discrimination (NI) Order (1976);
- The Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order 1998;
- Human Rights legislation as it applies in Northern Ireland;

- The University's Equality Scheme;
- The Bullying & Harassment (Dignity at Work) Policy and Procedures;
- The Student Charter;
- The Students' Union's Constitution; and
- The Student Handbook

## **POLICY STATEMENT – AIMS**

### **This Policy is intended to:**

- Ensure that students of different race, culture, political, gender and religious belief are welcomed and supported in an environment in which they are free to participate fully, safely and without fear, whilst respecting the diversity of opinion and the rights of others;
- The Students' Union pledges to use the opportunities it has through this policy to make a positive contribution for an inclusive, tolerant and open environment for all studying at Ulster University;
- Create opportunities for political leadership for those not represented outside of the student council in the wider community.

## **SCOPE**

This Policy applies to all Students' Union members, activities, societies and services. It focusses specifically on the good relations characteristics of race, religion and political opinion. It encompasses areas including political expression, culture, language and dress code. This policy subsumes the existing Students' Union Protocol.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

This policy has been developed by the Students' Union in conjunction with the Good Relations Policy Review Working Group, Ulster University and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. Lead responsibility for the policy lies with the Students Union President. Student Officers also have a responsibility. The policy has been approved by the University and Students' Union Forum and endorsed by the University's Senior Executive Team (SET) when originally created in 2014.

## **COMPLAINTS**

Any queries/complaints relating to good relations issues (i.e. race, religion, political, gender opinion) should be addressed in the first instance to the Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs on the specific campus.

Those wishing to make a formal complaint should follow the Students' Union's complaints procedure, which is available at [www.uusu.org](http://www.uusu.org) under the 'support' tab, once directed to the 'support' tab there are a number of advice articles the complaint procedure can be found under the 'academic' article and then the

'problems on your course' tab. This complaint will be followed up and replied to within 20 working days.

### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Further information regarding Good Relations can be found on the Equality Commission of Northern Ireland website:

[www.equalityni.org/sections/catlist.asp?catid=22](http://www.equalityni.org/sections/catlist.asp?catid=22)

### **REVIEW**

In line with the University's Equality Scheme this policy lapses every two years after implementation unless acknowledged and reviewed through Student Council. As the Students' Union President has lead responsibility of this policy, they will have responsibility to investigate if any change is necessary and then consult these changes with Student Officers and Student Council.